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"Great High Schools" are described as the first phase of a master plan to renew the physical facilities of the Pittsburgh School System from elementary school through middle school and high school. Various design features, technological innovations, instructional functions, and organizational and operational characteristics of these large, comprehensive schools are discussed in relation to realization of their proposed objectives, namely--(1) to provide quality education, (2) to provide totally comprehensive schools, and (3) to provide optimum opportunity for racially balanced schools. (FS)

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THE PITTSBURGH STORY

AASA Convention -- Atlantic City
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(Ad lib introduction)

Ultimately, every pupil in the Pittsburgh public schools, grades nine through twelve, will attend a school that does not exist today. New "Great High Schools" each with an enrollment of from 5,000-6,000 pupils, will house the high school pupils. These pupils now attend twenty-three secondary schools. Construction of the Great High Schools is the first phase of a master plan to renew the physical plant of an entire city from elementary, through middle school, and through high school. The second phase of the master plan calls for the construction of several new middle schools and the rehabilitation and conversion of most of the present senior high schools into middle schools. The middle schools will include grades six, seven, and eight. The third phase will be concerned with elementary school renewal.

The decision to house high school pupils in five buildings was made by the Board of Education to achieve three objectives: (1) to provide quality education, (2) to provide totally comprehensive schools, and (3) to provide optimum opportunity for racially balanced schools.

In achieving our objectives, we expect to offset the attraction to the suburbs by offering superior education in magnificent school environments to the children of young parents and by providing a trained and retrained supply of labor to the industrial and business community throughout the metropolitan area.

These are the basic goals of the master plan at all grade levels. This paper, however, will deal exclusively with the first phase, the Great High Schools.

I define a quality comprehensive high school as one that accepts every child--the swift, the average, the slow, the richly endowed, and the handicapped--and invests its total resources equally in each to prepare him to achieve his personal goal to the full extent his talents and ambitions permit.

If one accepts the thesis that DE FACTO segregated nonwhite schools are unrealistic social institutions that symbolize, in their way, the inevitability of the residential ghetto, then one must accept the integrated school as the public institution best able to prepare new generations to develop social mores compatible with the promises of a free and open society.

Those members of the professional staff of the Pittsburgh schools who have been deeply involved in the planning of the Great High Schools believe that the objectives previously stated can best be realized by building a small number of comprehensive high schools in Pittsburgh. A high school, with enrollments at each of the four grades numbering 1,200 to 1,500 pupils, can provide a rich curriculum at several levels of pupil competence at dollar costs that are feasible. Enrollments of this size will sustain pupil membership in sequences of courses through the four years. School administrators are familiar with the improvisations that are typically used in small schools to provide a few pupils with four years of Latin or modern languages, and even four years of mathematics. A large high school provides the opportunity to support teaching and learning with such technological innovations as closed-circuit television, computer-assisted instruction, and electronic retrieval systems. Since we equate quality comprehensive education with the school's instructional potential to fulfill the needs of every high school pupil, we believe we have the best chance of providing it in a very large school plant, with many more pupils than one typically finds in schools across the country.

Pittsburgh, for years, had separate vocational high schools and so-called academic high schools. The vocational high schools, largely craft-oriented, had been losing enrollments for years. Three years ago, we began absorbing the pupils enrolled in them into the academic high schools. In some instances, the vocational schools and the academic schools were in close enough proximity to combine and share both facilities under one principal; in other instances, new spaces were created in the academic high school for vocational and technical programs. Every single high school in Pittsburgh today offers a rich curriculum of vocational and technical programs, with pupils commingled in classrooms, regardless of the program of studies they have selected. The Great High School will expand on this theme of comprehensiveness both philosophically and architecturally.

If a school system wants to provide the absolute in integration, it should operate but one school. Two schools, properly managed, would be an improvement on three. At some point in planning, a decision has to be made as to the number of schools that seems to have the best chance of achieving the stated objectives.

It was also decided that our pupils would best be served in two-dimensional high schools. The first dimension would provide for the social-personal development of pupils. This function will be accommodated in a Student Center, with spaces designed to serve the out-of-classroom requirements of individual students, such as guidance and counseling, independent study, personal storage, and dining. The Student Center will be perhaps the most innovative feature of the Great High School. While physically separate, it will be related to the vast spaces provided for the second dimension--the classroom teaching-learning function. It was further decided that for the social-personal dimension, with its heavy overlay of guidance, the school would be organized into four separate houses. The teaching-learning dimension, on the other hand, would b

organized into subject-area departments. In other words, all pupils, regardless of the house to which they belong, will report to a single Department of English, which will serve all four houses. The alternative to this plan would have been to provide separate instructional facilities and faculties for each of the four houses, which, in fact, would have meant building four complete schools on one campus.

It was our concern for the individual pupil that led us to the social-personal dimension and the house plan. Many of us who have worked for years with inner-city youth would agree that the social-personal development of such pupils may be even more important to their future fulfillment as adults than is their mastery of subject matter. We were also concerned with the effect of the size of school and the large numbers of teachers and pupils on certain individual pupils who, even in smaller schools, tend to become quite anonymous. The house plan is intended to minimize this probability.

Each house will be organized around an advisory unit of about thirty-five pupils, one-fourth of whom will be drawn from each grade level. As eight or nine seniors graduate, they will be replaced by an equal number of ninth-graders. Each advisory unit will be a microcosm of the total school population as to race, sex, ethnic background, abilities, etc. An advisory unit will be in the charge of a teacher-adviser, whose office will be located in his advisory group's space in the Student Center.

Ten advisory groups will compose a counseling group of approximately 350 pupils to be served by a full-time counselor and supporting clerical staff. The counselor's office will be central to the location of the ten advisory groups he serves.

A house will comprise four counseling groups, one-fourth of the total school population. A dean will be the senior officer in charge. Each house will provide for

a widening circle of group associations, from a one-to-one relationship with some thirty-five pupils in the advisory group, to 350 in the counseling group, to 1,400 in each house, and finally to the total school community.

Each house will provide its own social and political activities, such as production of a house newspaper, plays, musical events, intramural sports events in competition with other house teams, and election of student officers. Each house will become, in essence, a smaller high school concerned primarily with the social-personal development of 25 per cent of the Great High School enrollment.

The teaching-learning functions of the Great High School will be organized by departments into fifteen instruction centers. They are alphabetically: Art, Business Education, English, Foreign Language, Mathematics, Music, Performing Arts, Personal Services, Physical Education, Resource Materials Center (Library), Science, Social Studies, Special Education for the Retarded, Technology, and Visual Communications.

The educational specifications provide for custom-designed spaces and equipment to serve the unique needs of each department. The Art Center, with its areas for sculpture, graphics, painting, ceramics, etc., will be quite different from the Social Studies Center, with its seminar rooms, movable walls for flexible spacing, and its rearscreen projection units. And both will be different from the Technology Center, with its 45,000 square-foot space to accommodate instruction in whatever courses are needed to supply trained personnel for the current demands of business and industry.

Each department will have its own satellite resource center, a teaching materials preparation room, a department head's office, and conference rooms.

The Resource Materials Center constitutes the academic nerve center of the entire school. It comprises the library and its modern complement--the multi-media section, with communications control and distribution station, television studio, listening area, previewing rooms, and recording booths.

In estimating the total enrollments of each of the Great High Schools, we have used a range of from 5,000-6,000 pupils. The 1,000 differential derives from an estimate of the use of the public high schools by the Catholic Diocesan School System. Firm commitments have been made by the Superintendent of the Catholic Schools to schedule approximately 1,000 pupils into each of the Great High Schools on a part-time basis. Some of these pupils will spend as much as a half day, every day, in the public school. Heavy enrollments are expected in foreign languages, advanced placement courses in science and mathematics, in physical education, the vocational-technical courses, and the arts. Parochial pupils will commingle with public school pupils. The problems of scheduling, even of the modular type, do not appear insurmountable, since each school will control the operation of a computerized scheduling program. Part-time enrollment of parochial pupils is welcomed by the public schools as a significant opportunity to enhance the values of school-community integration and to maintain the racial balance in the public high schools.

The Great High Schools will be open day and night, all week, twelve months of the year. In the evenings, they will be open for adults to take credit and noncredit extension courses, for Manpower Development Training, for hobby groups, and recreation. The performing arts center should attract amateur groups interested in music and drama. The auditorium and conference rooms will serve large and small community meetings.

If all goes well, construction of the first high school will start by mid-1970. Now that the educational specifications have been prepared and the architects are at work, the educational staff has three years to produce the teaching-learning specifications. Last fall we began the simulation in one high school of a 350-pupil Student Center with ten teacher advisers and one counselor. Other simulations, if financially feasible, will be attempted before the opening of the first school.

Originally, the schedule provided that the Great High Schools would be completed at six month intervals. The rising cost of both land and construction have modified that ambitious schedule. At the present time, we are completing the acquisition of properties on two sites and own most of a third site jointly with the city and county.

Of course, the key to the ultimate success of this concept is the future availability of tax funds. Like every other major American city, Pittsburgh desperately needs much greater assistance from state and federal governments.

I don't want to leave the impression that all other new construction and rehabilitation awaits the completion of the Great High Schools. We are launching a program of new elementary and middle schools that are clearly consistent with the ultimate Great High School program.

From the beginning of our planning, we visualized the Great High School as much more than a superb secondary school. We saw it as the nucleus of an education park, relating physically to its feeder middle schools, and they to their elementary and preprimary schools. We saw it as the hub of massive urban renewal efforts, and we saw it, most of all, as the symbol of the power of education to elevate the minds of men.

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